

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for providing annotation information for a set of data, comprising:
 querying an annotation store to retrieve one or more annotation records, each annotation record associated with a portion of the set of data and having one or more annotation fields;
 generating a linking value identifying the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records;
 consolidating data contained in the annotation fields; and
 returning an annotation data structure comprising a field containing the linking value and a field containing the consolidated data.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising returning the set of data with the annotation data structure.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein:
 the set of data is a relational table containing query results; and
 the method further comprises joining the annotation data structure with the set of data.
4. The method of claim 3, comprising joining the annotation data structure with the set of data prior to returning the annotation data structure.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the linking value comprises primary key data.
6. The method of claim 5, wherein the primary key data comprises compound primary key data involving at least two fields.
7. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving a query to retrieve the annotation data, the query identifying the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - receiving a query to retrieve the set of data; and
 - issuing the query against a data source separate from the annotation store to retrieve the set of data.
9. A method for providing user data and corresponding annotation data, comprising:
 - receiving, from a requesting entity, a query to return the user data;
 - retrieving the user data from a data source;
 - retrieving, from an annotation store, one or more annotation records associated with the one or more annotated portions of the user data;
 - consolidating annotation data contained in the annotation records;
 - joining the consolidated annotation data with the user data to generate a data structure containing the consolidated data; and
 - returning, to the requesting entity, the generated data structure.
10. The method of claim 9, further comprising generating one or more linking values identifying the one or more annotated portions of the user data.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein the linking values are utilized in the joining.
12. A computer-readable medium containing a program for returning annotation data which, when executed by a processor, performs operations comprising:
 - querying an annotation store to retrieve one or more annotation records, each annotation record associated with a portion of the set of data and having one or more annotation fields;
 - generating a linking value identifying the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records;
 - consolidating data contained in the annotation fields; and
 - returning an annotation data structure comprising a field containing the linking value and a field containing the consolidated data.

13. The computer-readable medium of claim 12, wherein the operations further comprise returning the set of data with the annotation data structure.
14. The computer-readable medium of claim 12, wherein:
 - the set of data is a relational table containing query results; and
 - the operations further comprise joining the annotation data structure with the set of data.
15. The computer-readable medium of claim 12, wherein the operations further comprise receiving a query to retrieve the annotation data, the query identifying the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records.
16. The computer-readable medium of claim 12, wherein the operations further comprise:
 - receiving a query to retrieve the set of data; and
 - issuing the query against a data source separate from the annotation store to retrieve the set of data.
17. A system for providing annotation information for a set of data, comprising:
 - an annotation database for storing annotation records containing annotation data; and
 - an executable component configured to query the annotation store to retrieve one or more annotation records, each annotation record associated with a portion of the set of data and having one or more annotation fields, generate a linking value identifying the portion of the set of data associated with the annotation records, consolidate data contained in the annotation fields, and return an annotation data structure comprising a field containing the linking value and a field containing the consolidated data.
18. The system of claim 17, wherein the executable component is further configured to return the set of data with the annotation data structure.

19. The system of claim 18, wherein the executable component is further configured to retrieve the user data from a data source separate from the annotation store.

20. The system of claim 18, wherein the executable component is further configured to join the consolidated annotation data with the user data, using the linking value, prior to returning the set of data with the annotation structure.